INTRODUCTION TO LEARNING BY FACING NEW SITUATIONS AND THEIR CHALLENGES

Experience is a key way to learn as it is a more active process than having information given to you. This is particularly the case when it comes to employability development, as the qualities that employers are looking for are not easily 'learned from a textbook'. They are best developed by experiencing new things and facing challenges where you need to draw on personal qualities to deal with a particular situation in order to try to achieve a positive outcome.

Learning should be a transformative process. You should expect to change the way you understand yourself and how you interact with others as a result of learning experiences. This transformation often happens when you have experienced something for the first time, or you’ve had to deal with something challenging, as that is where you build on existing skills or attributes or develop new ones.

The process begins with identifying activities, events, incidents, tasks or situations that occurred as part of your overall experience. Essentially, you are identifying something that has happened to you or you were involved in that you consider to be a learning opportunity. Then you need to pinpoint the new experience - and the challenges of experiencing something new or difficult - that you faced.

Don't be put off by our use of the word 'challenge'. By this we mean when you experience something for the first time, there are bound to be things that you will find a little bit difficult. The very fact that it is a 'new' experience should mean that you are developing yourself in some way and this is what learning is all about.

In fact, learning can come from a seemingly simple or ‘ordinary’ experience. It doesn’t have to be something hugely important to be a learning experience. Something as simple as turning up each week to play in a team that never wins can lead to increased resilience, which is a quality that is highly valued by employers.

Remember that the experience does not need to be a ‘workplace’ one. As a university student, you may have limited access to workplace experiences and employers recognise that. So you need to think about all the different things you do in your life where you may be able to take something away that contributes to your employability.